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SAPG-13786 ✓

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence 2 April 1957
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : AQUATONE Plans

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to remind you of the major decisions that need to be made in the near future concerning AQUATONE and to outline the manner in which I recommend that these decisions be obtained.

2. It goes without saying that the most important matter to be decided is whether we will be allowed to operate this summer and if so, where and how. Looking further ahead there are decisions to be made about the evolution and termination of this project after next fall. The basic planning decision is whether the Agency is to retain a capability after the fall of 1957 and if so on what scale and under what cover. If a capability is to be retained, four specific courses of action under consideration seem at this time to exhaust the possibilities.

a. Continued operation at roughly present strength.

b. Continued operation with two detachments with fewer aircraft and about half the present number of people.

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d. Continued operation with either one or two carrier-based detachments in cooperation with the Navy.

Either (or both) of the last two modes of operation could of course be combined with continued operations from Air Force bases as at present.

25X1A

25X1A

3. Considerable urgency attaches to the making of these longer run plans. Decisions must be made in the near future on; the disposition of 


the budget for Fiscal Year 1958, our requirement for the facilities now occupied at AF bases abroad (especially Adana), the conversion or purchase of equipment for carrier operations(if alternative course of action d. is contemplated)

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and the number of aircraft to be turned over to SAC. If these decisions cannot be made in a reasonably orderly way, opportunities will be lost, funds and personnel will be wasted and effectiveness will be impaired.

4. A fact which has a most important bearing on decisions concerning both this summer and the next season is the progress being made with the RAINBOW program. I am now reasonably confident that we will be able by the time we see the President to report that we have achieved approximately the maximum result we have thought possible but we will have to explain that there is still a good chance of at least occasional detection. I am also confident that if this degree of achievement is confirmed, the vulnerability of the U-2 aircraft to interception will be little higher next season than this. Accordingly, RAINBOW improves the chances for operations this season and justifies reconsideration of the original concept of terminating AQUATONE, which was based on the assumption that the U-2's comparative immunity from interception would not last more than two years beyond its first exposure.

5. Whatever decisions are made about AQUATONE should, I believe, be taken into account in making certain decisions about I believe major economies would be possible through a complete merger of these two projects. But such a merger would not be wise or in the long run economical if AQUATONE is to be liquidated in six months time.

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6. Recommendations: I believe it vital that you, or you and General White together, obtain the President's views on the questions posed above, including those that relate to next year. I submit that this activity is far too costly in money and personnel to be continued very much longer unless the President so desires. Some elements at least in the Air Force will oppose the maintenance of a capability beyond the present season unless they have reason to believe that this capability is more likely to be used if it remains in our hands than if it is transferred to theirs. A Presidential opinion would both furnish this indication and carry the authority that would assure continued willing cooperation. I recommend, therefore:

a. That these issues be discussed with General White prior to a meeting with the JCS.

b. That you discuss with the JCS the various possible courses of action and state your intention of seeking Presidential guidance.

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c. That you and General White present these alternatives to the President without strong recommendations and seek an indication of his opinion.

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RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Project Director

RMB:djm

1-DCI

2-DDCI

3-Dep. Pro. Dir.

4-Pro. Dir. Chrono

5-Pro. Dir. Subj

✓ 6-Proj. Chrono (Hold)